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Page: N/A
Reach: 635681
Value: 17044



Wish you were here? President spends \$1.5million on his holiday in Hawaii... while the rest of America faces a bleak New Year

President Obama has splashed out more than \$1.5million on a sunshine break in Hawaii while many Americans are still struggling in the aftermath of the economic meltdown.

With Washington in a deep freeze, Mr Obama yesterday extended his stay on Oahu until next Monday.

But he is facing claims on the island that he could have been more frugal in his two-week getaway with wife Michelle and daughters Malia and Sasha at a luxury beachfront rental home in Kailua, an upscale resort about 12 miles from the capital, Honolulu.

According to the Hawaii Reporter, the bill for the trip included:

\$63,000 on an early flight bringing Mrs Obama and the children to Hawaii ahead of the president.

\$1,000,000 on Mr Obama's return trip from Washington on Air Force One. \$38,000 for the 'Winter White House' the president has rented for his family on the beach.

\$16,000 to rent beachfront homes for Secret Service and Navy Seals.

\$134,000 for 24 White House staff to stay at the Moana Hotel.

\$251,000 in police overtime.

\$10,000 for an ambulance to be on hand at all times

And those tallies do not include the travel costs of Mr Obama's staff and Secret Service, car rentals and surveillance operations in advance of the trip, which could easily add up to more than £30,000.

The White House would not comment on the cost of the stay. A spokesman said the president's holiday expenses are in line with those of previous presidents.

But the Hawaii Reporter claimed yesterday: 'They could have chosen a less expensive and more secure place to stay such as a beachfront home on the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station - just a two-minute drive away from the Kailuana Place property where they are now. 'The president visits the military base daily to workout, bowl with his kids or enjoy the more private beach there. 'He also could have stayed at a home 15 minutes away on the beach fronting Bellows Air Force Base as President Bill Clinton did.' The 7,000 square foot home where the president is vacationing has five bedrooms, a media room and a secluded lagoon-style pool with tropical waterfalls and a spa. The Obamas holidayed at the same spot last year, but rising fuel costs have pushed up the estimated travel costs and the president flew later than the rest of his family because of delayed votes in Washington, adding more to the escalating expenses.

The Honolulu Police Department said overtime for officers cost \$250,000 last year, compared to \$106,000 in 2008 before his inauguration.

The President has no intention of going to a new location for his vacations.



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White House spokesman Bill Burton, who is with the president in Hawaii, said: 'Like most Americans, the president knows what he likes in his own hometown.

'He's been going to a lot of these places since he was a very young child and they hold an important place in his life.'

For his Hawaiian vacations, Mr Obama surrounds himself with a small circle of friends and family.

His sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, lives on Oahu with her family. Marty Nesbitt and Eric Whitaker, two of Obama's friends from Chicago join him there for the holidays, as do childhood friends Mike Ramos and Bobby Titcomb.

But some local residents would like to see the president more engaged with the community.

'Just because we're in Hawaii and it's paradise doesn't mean it's paradise for everyone,' said Mike Irvine, who has lived in Honolulu since 1985.

'Going to a black church, or maybe a homeless shelter would be a big deal.'

Mr Obama's desire for familiarity during his vacations is nothing new for occupants of the Oval Office.

Ronald Reagan frequently retreated to his mountaintop ranch near Santa Barbara, California, spending more than a year there over the course of his presidency.

George H.W. Bush sought sanctuary at his oceanfront home in Maine, and his son, George W. Bush, rarely left his sprawling ranch during trips to Crawford, Texas.

Former President Bill Clinton was the rare exception. He was often spotted jogging, sailing and dining out during summer trips to Martha's Vineyard.

And with no vacation home of his own, Mr Clinton varied his destinations, travelling to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, golfing on Amelia Island, Florida, and skiing in Park City, Utah.

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